

[Mrs. George F. Cornell]

Interview [2nd?]

JUL 17 1937

Mrs. Belle Kilgore

718 Wallace Street

Clovis New Mexico

July 10, 1937

1150 words

MRS. GEORGE F. CORNELL

717 Pile Street

Clovis, New Mexico

One day early in the week I called on Mrs. Cornell. She is a very pleasant woman in her early sixties. I was very favorably impressed when she ushered me into her living room.

Of course, I knew that she was an artist, but I was not prepared to see such excellent decoration as were on the walls of her home. The room was finished in harmonious colors of yellows and brown. tho'se panels depicted different scenes in the historical development of the west. There campfire scenes, covered wagons, Indians, on the chase and attacking the early white settlers, wooded scenes and thro'ugh it all you could see the pen of an artist.

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"Yes, there are my designs," she answered to my question if she had planned the work. "I took only a few lessons of drawing and painting in school and so people call me a 'natural-born artist.'"

Her husband is an interior decorator and she assist him in his designing. They have decorated many private homes, for there they can have a free hand and be elaborate or simple as the case may warrant. Cl8 - N. Mex.

"You might call us 'pioneer tourists, for we came out west with a cousin, traveling for his health in 1917. We were seventeen days on the road. We went to California on that trip. In 1918 we moved here and have been here almost all the time 2 since that date. Our work has been done thro'ughout the western cities of this country and Texas.

"It used to seem very strange to me. The people spoke differently then from what they do now, but I suppose I have just become used the to the way they talk in the south and west. It must be that I have become accustomed to the eccentric manners and speech, for I do not notice now that the people are so very much different from tho'se in the same circumstances in life from tho'se in Ohio.

"I was born near Toledo, Ohio and was educated in that state, lived there until we came to New Mexico.

"The sand was one of the greatest annoyances that we had to put up with. There were no paved streets or hard roads. When we started to go any where we always took a spade and shovel and burlap sacks. Generally we started out fairly well, but the sand would become so deep in places that our car would stick, then Mr. Cornell would get out and shovel and dig the sand away from the wheels, then place the burlap sacks in front of them. I would drive the car and perhaps would go a few hundred feet and stall, then there would be more digging and scratching and much sweating and down the burlap sacks

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would be placed, again and again we would have to repeat the process, until we arrived at our destination.

"I remember once that my cousin, a minister was called to Melrose to perform a marriage ceremony. It is about twenty-five miles west of Clovis. He did not have a car, so I told him that I would take him up there in our car. We went through the usual process of digging and padding the road and consequently we were late. When we arrived the [?] crowd had come from all over that section of the country. The bride's mother took me quite a distance from the house and told me in hushed tones, "we are not going to have anything to eat." It had been customary for the infair dinner to be given by the groom's parents the day before the wedding and a bridal dinner to be given on the day of the ceremony by the bride's parents. We went back to the two-room [?] shack or house. Now a shack is a building either of lumber or adobe or of any material that the homesteader could get for the least money and these shacks are made with a roof that has only one side pitched or elevated.

The bride decided that she wanted some one to play a 'wedding march.' They asked me to play but I could not play or could not think of anything that would be appropriate. They had an upright organ, finally a lady in the crowd said that she could play church music. They handed me a song book and requested that I select a suitable song for them to march to. Well, the song was selected, but I have forgotten what song I chose and the organist began to play. There were only a few steps for the bride and groom to march so before the first two or three bars of music had been played, the couple were standing before the preacher. By that time the house was literally jammed.

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I was given a seat of honor, for I was the 'honor guest.' It was a large rocking chair, with a high back. There were also two high-back dining room chairs, and do not recall whether there were any other chairs, but there were many boxes and stools.

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The ceremony began with some confusion. It was to be a ring ceremony, and the groom fumbled around in his pocket, finally found the ring, started to give to the preacher, but dropped it. It rolled around on the floor among the people. At last it was found and the minister performed the usual ceremony. When he pronounced `husband and wife' there was a general rush to congratulate them and a great deal of kissing and many suggestive wishes.

When the hubbub had subsided, the minister said that he needed some witnesses to sign the license. He suggested that the bride's and groom's mothers sign the paper. The bride's mother was a short plump, smiling woman and signed the license and stepped back for the groom's mother to put her name. This lady was a tall angular sober woman and dignifiedly walked up to the table and took the pen in her hand, put the pen on the paper. She raised abruptly and said, "Why. I can't write." There was a hush in the room, very embarrassed the lady turned away and sat down quickly in one of the high back chairs. and zoom, the chair collapsed, and she fell to the floor. Her voluminous skirts and feet went straight up in the air, when she attempted, to rise, she could not and began to yell. There was a great scramble, and the minister with the help of some of the guests finally lifted her to her feet.

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"Yes, I signed the license as a witness. This may not seem so queer to the western people as it did to me at that time. But with the humorous surroundings and awkwardness there was love and kindness and these young people wanted the ceremony according to custom that they had seen and read about. These young people who married twenty years ago, are now among the foremost families of the county and have all modern conveniences that come with hard roads and paved streets.

The western ways and southern drawl is not so pronounced because the citizens of this territory have come from all parts of the United States, and have [?] gone thro'ugh the melting pot, as it were and have developed into one of the best classes of people, and

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have the easiest flow of language. The western terms, Spanish phrases influenced by Indian idioms makes a rich expressive and purposeful language.

We have had many [?] and varied experiences traveling around in the different parts of the country.

Once up in the mountains, we were traveling, but my husband wanted to go on a hunt and as we were near a small house, we camped there that night and asked me if I would afraid to stay there until he came back from the hunt. I told that I would not be afraid. It was a two room shack and all the windows were out and there was no door shutter. During the day, long horned cows came and put their heads or tried to, in the windows. I drove them away. My husband did not get back that night so I barred the doorway 6 with some brush and passed the night by myself. The next morning soon after sunup, a man stepped up into the door-way. I had taken the brush away. I jumped and so did he. "Oh," he said, "I did not know that anyone was here. I want to get my saddle and blanket out of that back room." He was very sorry that he startled me. My husband in from his hunt and had not been successful."

Mrs. Cornell is [a?] very entertaining lady and is connected with the Women's Club. and the Presbyterian church.